

HONORING THE LIFE OF DR.
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Martin Luther King Day that we celebrated earlier this week. Americans celebrated the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King who would have turned 78 this month. While there is much left to be done, Dr. King's dream of a colorblind society is closer to reality this year than last.

Dr. King championed nonviolent resistance as a means to bring about fundamental change. He sought such change to bring about equality between peoples of all races, an end to segregation and racial injustice and improved working conditions for all.

Dr. King was a master of rhetoric, and he used his power to bring together Americans from a variety of backgrounds to march in pursuit of equality and justice. And Dr. King achieved great success at attaining these lofty goals, despite his murder at the age of 39.

At only 26 years of age, Dr. King became a national figure by leading the Montgomery bus boycott. At that time, Dr. King was the new pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and was spurred to action by the arrest of Rosa Parks for refusing to give her seat on a public bus to a white man. Dr. King inspired action through his words, "There comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression." With that, he called for a citywide boycott of public transit and demanded first come, first served seating, courteous treatment by bus operators, and the employment of African American bus drivers. The boycott lasted 382 days and in that time, Dr. King's house was bombed and he was arrested. Ultimately, the United States Supreme Court outlawed racial segregation on public transportation.

With the success of the Montgomery bus boycott, Dr. King noted, "We have gained a new sense of dignity and destiny. We have discovered a new and powerful weapon, nonviolent resistance."

Nonviolent resistance, which had been pioneered by Mohandas Gandhi in India, became a cornerstone of King's strategy to gain full civil rights and equality for all people. Over the next 13 years, Dr. King achieved basic civil rights for African-Americans, desegregation, the annulment of Jim Crow laws and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Dr. Martin Luther King Day allows us to reflect on the steps that we, as a nation, have made towards fulfilling Dr. King's dream. Dr. King's 1963 March on Washington was organized around numerous demands for civil rights, many of which are still very relevant today. One such demand was full and

fair employment, including a raise in the minimum wage from \$1.25 to \$2 at that time.

□ 1215

I am proud that last week is part of the 110th Congress' first 100 hours. The House of Representatives addressed this issue by raising the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25. This will significantly benefit a great many low-income families, including the 2.1 million African American minimum wage earners. Other legislation in the first 100 hours will improve health care and education for American families, including 3.9 million African American Medicare beneficiaries and 2.3 million African American college students.

This past weekend I commemorated the work of Martin Luther King, Jr., at the Jackie Robinson Park and at the Metropolitan Baptist Church in my district. At these celebrations my constituents and I examined our progress over the past 40 years since Dr. King's tragic death and remember his line from "I Have a Dream" about the fierce urgency of now. Dr. King preached then that now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children, and it is still that time now.

With continued and wide disparities and access to higher education, wages, and access to health care, we as a Nation still have much work before us. Now, even as we celebrate one of the truly great men in this Nation's history, it is time to recommit ourselves to the vision of Dr. King and bring about racial equality and opportunity for every American.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. FOXX addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

FIRST 100 HOURS OF THE NEW CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to stand here today and report to the American people that we have completed the 100-hours agenda. We are demonstrating that we have kept our promise. We have set a tone for the 110th Congress that is one of cooperation, consensus, and compromise that extends beyond party lines. From the ethics reforms to restoring fiscal

responsibility, to strengthening our national security, to giving more Americans a realistic shot at the American Dream, the new Democratic majority is committed to real and lasting results for the people that we serve.

On the opening days of the Congress, January 4, we adopted the most sweeping ethics package since the post-Watergate era. We restored tough pay-as-you-go budget rules, which will begin to reverse the record budget deficits that are passing on trillions of dollars to our children and grandchildren. We all recognize how important that is.

We recognize that we are some \$8.6 trillion in debt, that each one now owes over \$29,000. In fact, every child born now owes some \$29,000 in order for us to pay the debt.

In the remainder of the first 100 hours, we have turned to passing the Six for '06 agenda to meet the everyday needs of all Americans. We made America safer by the passage of a bill that implements the recommendation of the bipartisan 9/11 Commission, which were submitted by Congress in 2004.

We are extremely proud of that particular piece of legislation, because it allows us to address those needs that were identified by the commission, needs, especially, in south Texas, as we know, on border security, that are critical, other needs, such significant, although they might be considered not so important, but the importance of the agencies to be able to communicate with each other that was found to be one of the most difficult problems that we have still, but have not confronted.

We made our economy fair by passing a bill that increases the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25 an hour over the next 2 years, affecting approximately 900,000 employees in Texas. Texas is hit the hardest with this, with the minimum wage; and we are extremely proud to have passed that piece of legislation. It also impacts some of 28.6 percent of the jobs that pay below the Federal poverty line in Texas. We have improved health care by passing and extending the Federal funding for lifesaving embryonic stem cell research, which will help 110 million Americans suffering from diseases.

We have helped to make health care more affordable by passing a bill that directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services to conduct cost savings negotiations with the drug companies for lower prices for Medicare beneficiaries. That is essential. The way the legislation has been written is basically un-American, not allowing us to bargain with the pharmaceutical companies to get lower prices, very similar to what the VA does now.

We know that they are able to get prices at 60 percent lower than what we can for our seniors under Medicare. This particular piece of legislation is going to be out there, and it is going to help all of us, and especially the taxpayer that has to pay for Medicare. So we are extremely proud to have passed that piece of legislation in the last 100 hours.

We also make college more affordable by passing a bill that cuts the interest rates on subsidized student loans for undergraduates in half over the next 5 years. This is particularly important, also, for Hispanic Americans, since 50 percent of Latinos, undergrads, receive Federal aid affecting some 205,000 students throughout this country.

We are extremely proud to have done that. The interest rates on those loans for those students is essential, that we can lower them to a level where it has a direct impact on the cost of higher education. We also know that tuition has been increasing. No one knows that better than parents and young people that are going to college.

We set America on the path to energy independence by passing a bill that repeals \$14 billion in subsidies to big oil and gas companies and invests those funds, instead, in clean, renewable energy resources and alternative fuels.

This is just the beginning of the work we are going to be doing. I am really pleased.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. TAYLOR addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TOOK BACK THEIR GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to lend my voice with all of the people who voted for a change for America, but especially to lend my voice with my fellow new Congressmen, the freshmen. I rise because I believe that we were sent here to pursue an agenda for America, to set our country on a new course, a new course which put the public good at the center of our efforts, a new course which said that politics must be in service to the average citizen.

This past November, the winds of change took on a gale force in American politics. American people took back their government. They sent a loud and clear message that the government was here for them, by them and of them. No more, no big contracts. No more legislation written behind closed doors by and for the special interests, no more whittling away the constitutional rights that we were fighting, and no more bridges built to nowhere. No more rubber-stamp administration.

We are going to have an active and engaged Congress that really believes in the principle of oversight, and no more escalating an oil war that we believe is sacrificing innocent young Americans for no legitimate purpose.

The American people voted in record numbers and demanded that their voices be heard. They wanted their government to respond to their needs, and their needs are not the needs of the big oil companies, the big pharmaceutical companies or the Halliburtons of this world.

American people want a new politics of inclusion, of generosity. The American people want a new politics which says everybody counts and everybody matters. The Democrats heard them.

In record time, 100 hours, we made history by passing a people's agenda. Yes, within 100 hours, minimum-wage workers were able to say that they were getting a raise; within 100 hours, lifesaving research, so that people could have a real chance at a cure for their loved ones and themselves. Within 100 hours, real implementation of the 9/11 Commission recommendations, and within the 100 hours we made a real statement about education being affordable for all Americans.

I am proud to be a Member of this new class of freshmen, proud to be a Member of these folks who came here to make a change to put the public interest first. The public interest is a very good idea, and I am very proud to say that I have been a part of it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CUMMINGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

FRESHMEN 100 HOURS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. SUTTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, there are times when the people of this great Nation need and demand things of their government that politics make it impossible to accomplish. This has been the case far too often throughout the last 12 years. Through the last election, the people of this Nation have demanded that this government reexamine and change our priorities and our direction.

The people have asked us to respond to their hopes and their dreams and their needs. They have asked us to realize that there are good citizens of this Nation, honest people who work hard and play by the rules and who nonetheless struggle and live in poverty and toil in obscurity through no fault of their own.

The people have called us to recognize the equality of opportunity, the basis upon which this Nation was founded, the means of equal access to education, equal chances to go to college. The people have demanded that we never squash the hope of science with the politics of partisan personal gain, that we never play games with

the opportunity to save lives. They know that the minute that this great Nation stops being a beacon of hope and a champion of forward progress for the world, that we become something less than what we are.

The people have demanded that we never allow the concerns of special interests to collide with the public good, that there will come a day when the quality of our time will be judged not only on our ability to pioneer lifesaving drugs but our ability to make them available to all of our citizens.

The people have demanded that when you gather a group of our Nation's leading experts and ask them to take a hard look at what we need to do to keep our people safe and make our Nation stronger, that they take on that charge and honor their commitment, that you do everything necessary to implement their recommendations handed down to you; and the people have demanded that the conduct of our public officials be beyond reproach, that the great balancing act of our democracy rests upon a fulcrum of public trust that is fragile as it is vital.

But for the past 12 years, politics has demanded something different. Between the 104th and 109th Congress, 6,900 rollcall votes were taken, and politics prevailed almost every time.

In the very first few hours of the 110th Congress, the people have had their day. The people compelled us to raise the minimum wage, not politics. The people asked us to work to cut student loan rates in half, not politics. The people led us to expand stem cell research, not politics. Concern for those people made it imperative that we implement the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission and that we take away the tax breaks for oil companies that have made their profits on the backs of recent American suffering, that we start a process for real meaningful negotiation for prescription drugs, not politics.

The people move us to make immediate changes in the ethical rules that govern this Chamber. Their commitment to a new day in America, and a new day in Congress made it vital that we restore the public trust. We saw the faces and heard the needs of the people we were elected to serve; and in this first 100 hours, we have acted. We have brought in new leadership that recognizes that this was a Nation disconnected with its government, and they have taken immediate and bold steps to reconnect it.

I would be remiss not to commend the leadership's admirable example for the past 2 weeks.

The people were at the heart of what we have done here so far, and the people will be at the heart of the legislative agenda we champion in the days to come.

□ 1230

Mr. Speaker, these past 2 weeks have been times of great change, historic times that herald an era of American